

DO COLLECTIONS FOSTER THE LUST OF POSSESSION.

READ AT THE MEETING OF THE MANCHESTER BRANCH
BY S. HIRTZEL.

First, what do we mean by a "collection?" Do we mean an orderly, classified arrangement of objects—chiefly in connection with Natural History—or a heterogeneous hoard of objects of all kinds, from stamps to old boots?

In either case, I must confess, so far as I have studied the subject, there is a decided tendency towards the tabooed desire.

1. When one recalls the contents of certain small boys' pockets, not to be touched by anyone, and the quick "that's mine," which attended any attempt at confiscation, the hoarding of old penny stamps and the reluctance to part with even a torn one, one is tempted to think that collections are not an unmixed evil.

2. With regard to the orderly collections, I had their disadvantages plainly represented last year in the case of a charming youth at a public school, who had started a museum on his own account. All his collections were admirably arranged and classified, and this hobby of his made his holidays very easy for everyone at home; but his desire to possess anything and everything which might enhance the value of his collections was little short of a mania. I think the fault of the whole thing lay in the fact that no one else had part or lot in his hobby. The museum belonged to him exclusively, and his brothers and sisters had no possession therein.

The case for collections is certainly not encouraging from this particular point of view, particularly when one thinks of

the grown-up "collectors" one knows. People who would perhaps give their life for you, would grudge to part with one single stamp from a large collection unless an exchange of equal value is produced.

It is of no use to blind ourselves to the fact that even without the aid of "collections," children, and grown-ups too, are fatally prone to this not to be encouraged desire, and the curious part of the whole thing is that it is *not* the objects they collect which is of importance, because people will collect anything which it is the fashion to collect; it is the mere fact of possession—"this is *mine* and you cannot have it."

The desire, after all, is a natural one, and makes for prosperity, though not for peace.

What is the cause of the present war in the East? The lust of possession.

What was the cause of the Boer war? I say again—the lust of possession.

What made Wee MacGregor clout Willie Thompson's head? What but the lust of possession!

What makes a man work hard? Most often in order that he may make a home for himself, and so possess a wife and children and become a power in his corner of the land.

This thing is one of the great primary causes, and its effects, on the whole, are not injurious, kept within bounds. At the same time, we do not want to encourage it in the children to an undue extent.

It is not my intention to speak of the advantages of this much talked over "collections," that is someone else's part; I have merely tried to represent the fact that so far as I can see at present, the question for discussion must be answered, however reluctantly, in the affirmative.

AN ANSWER TO MISS HIRTZEL'S PAPER
BY E. L. MULLONEY.

There seems to be no doubt that collecting has its dark side, yet for all that, I am inclined to think that the good outweighs the evil.

Let us take the first point put forward by the opposition, viz.:—The heterogeneous hoard of objects of all kinds.

When I think of the pleasure derived from such a hoard by our small friends I cannot find it in my heart to forbid it. The collection is often made, I believe, in the fond hope that the things will be useful some day; and when, it may be, a piece of treasured string does come in just at the right moment, it is a proud and happy time for the owner.

Then, we Ambleside students all know the importance of opening up new spheres of interest for our pupils, and it seems to me that many new interests of great importance may have their origin in the habit of collecting, here a little and there a little.

For example:—Children at the sea-side can be led to observe the natural objects of the sea-shore by the suggestion of making a collection of stones, or shells, or sea-weed. It may or may not lead to much at the time, but in having an end in view, it does help to develop a habit of pleasurable observation which will be a great help in the future.

In the second case—

With regard to the orderly collections, I have only good to say for them, in spite of the fact that there may be an element of selfishness in them. Cannot this last be prevented by starting with the understanding that the collection, when made, is to be devoted to some purpose, *i.e.*, a boys' club, or a hospital, or what not? The great point, I think, is that collecting is such an aid to sustained interest, and therefore must be a valuable item in education.

We start, for instance, at the beginning of the summer to collect either birds' eggs, or flowers, grasses or mosses, and as our collection grows, the greater becomes our interest and knowledge, and our horizon is widened out all around us.

There is certainly the "lust of possession" to be guarded against, but that has a way of creeping in in all our work and play unless we are on the look out to put it from us.

Miss Hirtzel says: "The desire of possession makes for prosperity." I should like to add that collecting makes for peace, for I know of nothing more peace-giving to grown-ups or small people than to have a hobby, and a hobby generally includes collecting in some shape or form.

POSSIBILITIES OF EXPANSION.

After re-reading an article on the above subject in the December number of the "Pianta," I would like to mention two very small ways in which my pupils L. and T. (living in a country place in Ireland with a village near at hand), have been able to find outside work.

Three years ago there were two unhappy little boys in the village here, one had had a leg amputated, and the other was deaf and dumb. So L. and T. started a basket-work class on Saturday mornings from 12 to 1 o'clock, and invited them to come. David, aged seven, and lame, proved to be very handy, and learnt the preliminaries of basket-making very easily; but Jimmy, aged six, and deaf and dumb, was more difficult to manage. We had to teach him entirely by signs, and it quite repaid one to see the happy smile when he succeeded; the puzzled, unhappy look on his face when things went wrong was quite pathetic. They came regularly, and in a short time other boys asked to be allowed to join. Now, although Jimmy has left the class and the neighbourhood, we have eight boys, ranging from the ages of six to ten years, and David makes very fine baskets without help!

The younger boys use round cane for their baskets, but David uses osier for spokes, and No. 7 round cane for weaving.

Of course they all have to come with clean hands, and have to tidy the room when the class is over.

2. We were so distressed to see that all the cottage people decorate their houses with ugly paper roses, which fade and collect the dust, and yet living in the country as they do, the fields and hedges are thick with flowers. So we are trying to cultivate the love of flowers in the younger generation, by offering small prizes for the best arranged bunches of wild flowers.

We hold the flower show in the garden, and the girls (any who like) gather bunches of wild flowers and arrange them in large jam pots; then a prize is awarded to the most

artistically arranged pot. At first the general idea of arranging flowers was to pick as many different kinds of flowers as possible with very short stalks, and crush them down into the pot. Now they have discovered that butter-cups with cow-parsley, blue-bells with grasses, sprays of crab apple or cherry, gorse and stitchwort, etc., make very pretty decorations.

F. W.

CO-EDUCATION.

The greatest quarrels, and half the miseries in the world, arise from misunderstandings. There is no subject upon which men and women could display such a pitiful ignorance as that of each other's essential natures and traditional points of view. It is, alas! a common saying, that no woman can understand, or live up to, a man's code of honour, and yet half the men in the world divide women sweepingly into two categories—angels to be worshipped, and dolls to be played with.

If education is a preparation for life and all its manifold responsibilities, surely it should, with due safeguards, initiate us into the conditions which will limit and determine our future. As men and women we are not going to live in monasteries or nunneries, or in vast communities of our own sex alone. We have got nowadays very often to work side by side, with desks touching and a common inkpot. Men and women, by our present social code, enjoy a freedom of intercourse unknown even twenty years ago. Young people are discovering, though often through a series of rather painful mistakes, that it is possible for there to be real friendship between them with no intrusion of sentiment. How then do we prepare ourselves to live in this world of common work and play? Girls and boys are immured in great numbers in an atmosphere of artificial exclusion from each other; and intercourse, which would be pleasant and harmless under

other circumstances, instantly becomes one of the greatest evils and most serious, because most secret, danger with which a school-master or mistress may have to cope. The girl, who in one short year will correspond freely with half a dozen boy friends, would perhaps be the black sheep of a whole school where such notes must necessarily be clandestine, and are treated as "contraband of war."

One cannot hesitate, in the face of much that heads of great public schools for either sex have openly declared, to affirm that the atmosphere of mystery and the stealthiness necessary in the pursuit of things, lawful enough in themselves, does much to create that very moral evil which it is supposed to prevent.

The present writer heard only last autumn the views of a late head-master of ———, and a present head-mistress of a great endowed school which was originally worked on the lines of co-education; and they both declared that it was impossible to train men and women to live an honourable and cleanly life under the present system of divorcing them from each other arbitrarily, during the most dangerous and impressionable years of their life. It is an open secret that many parents, whose sons would in the natural course of things have gone to one of our great public schools in particular, decline to send their sons there, on account of the low moral tone which the masters are powerless to prevent, owing to the mass of natures with which they have to deal in so large a school.

Yet so conservative are we English people that we are terrified of any innovation which would seem to radically alter the traditional methods of training Englishmen. As to the training of Englishwomen, that can hardly be said to be traditional, for even girl's boarding schools could not prove a record of more than one hundred and fifty years at most, while the high schools and women's colleges have not half a century to fall back upon.

Men and women, brothers and sisters, were intended by nature to be brought up and trained in the family, not necessarily to do the same things, but still less bound to do their daily work utterly apart from each other. In the days when chivalry was supposed to render a man the willing champion and devout slave of the woman, he was trained in the household of some king or overlord; living a life certainly